

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 648

By McNally

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend William Jenkins "Bill" Wilcox, Jr., for a life-time of achievements related to successes of The Manhattan Project during the years of World War II and his subsequent work to preserve and record the history of the City of Oak Ridge.

WHEREAS, it is fitting for the members of this General Assembly to pause in their deliberations to salute those citizens who, through their remarkable abilities and actions, have distinguished themselves as national treasures of whom we can all be proud; and

WHEREAS, one such estimable person is William Jenkins "Bill" Wilcox, Jr., a resident of Anderson County; who was given the title of Honorary Historian of the City of Oak Ridge in 2006, and who is fondly known as the face and the voice of that fine municipality; and

WHEREAS, the son of the late William Jenkins and Kitty Rogers Wilcox, Bill Wilcox was born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on January 26, 1923, but his family soon re-located to Allentown where he grew up excelling in Boy Scouts and enjoying the great outdoors, especially trout fishing; and

WHEREAS, upon graduation from Allentown High School, Mr. Wilcox matriculated to Washington & Lee University in Lexington, Virginia, being graduated *cum laude* from that hallowed institution in May 1943, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Chemistry; and

WHEREAS, that same month and year, Mr. Wilcox was hired into The Manhattan Project, Badge #254, which he carried throughout his professional career. He began as a young chemist at the Y-12 Plant where electromagnetic processes were used in the separation and purification of uranium; and

WHEREAS, in 1949, Bill Wilcox moved to K-25, the Gaseous Diffusion Plant, where he made many scientific contributions to the field of nuclear physics, including the development and application of new materials technologies to gas centrifuges, which even today is the world's choice method for uranium enrichment; and

WHEREAS, before commencing the final leg of his career, Bill Wilcox worked front-line in the laboratories, as well as in the head offices at Y-12 and at K-25, and he ultimately served in the top leadership position, Technical Director, at both of the K-25 and Y-12 facilities; and

WHEREAS, from 1980 until his retirement in 1986, Bill Wilcox served as Technical Assistant to three different presidents of Oak Ridge facilities' operating contractors. During that time, he headed up and wrote the final report of the independent Mercury Task Force which was constituted to examine the impact on workers and the environment resulting from mercury spills during the separation and enrichment processes that took place during the 1950s and 1960s; and

WHEREAS, having spent half of his adult life working in positions of ever-increasing complexity and responsibility at the Oak Ridge facilities, Bill Wilcox can be said to have created much of the history of the development of atomic weaponry at those facilities. His contributions to The Manhattan Project at Oak Ridge did, in fact, change the course of world history, and he truly was one of the best scientists that Oak Ridge had to offer during the Manhattan era and the years after World War II; and

WHEREAS, since retirement, Bill Wilcox has devoted the second half of his life to the preservation and interpretation of the history of Oak Ridge and The Manhattan Project that the United States government surreptitiously carried out within the bounds of that place in East Tennessee. He is one of those true jewels of our living history who has done the lion's share of the needed communication and preservation of the Oak Ridge's history, and he continues into his eighty-ninth year strongly supporting the city's heritage; and

WHEREAS, a man who, in so many ways and for so many reasons, is Oak Ridge, Bill Wilcox has championed the history of that Secret City in written and spoken word. By the summer of 2010, he had given one hundred forty-six talks on varying aspects of wartime Oak Ridge and the history of the government's nuclear development facilities from technical, social, and personal perspectives; and

WHEREAS, putting pen to paper, Bill Wilcox has written numerous books and papers on historical subjects relating to Oak Ridge, including The Role of Oak Ridge in the Manhattan

Project, An Overview of the History of Y-12, The Manhattan Project – Why Did it Succeed?, and A Brief History of K-25 1939-2006; and

WHEREAS, at the behest of the American Museum of Science and Energy in 2000, he researched and wrote a paper entitled “From Us in Oak Ridge to Tojo- NDG – The Story of Lt. Nick Del Genio’s Autographed Dollar Bill” about the dollar bill containing signatures of thirty-four key figures involved in the final delivery of the atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan in August 1945; and

WHEREAS, Bill Wilcox has consulted on and made appearances in a host of media pieces concerning Oak Ridge and its nuclear development facilities. In 2002, he advised and critiqued extensively on the History Channel’s Modern Marvels Series episode, “The Manhattan Project,” and did the same for Fox News Channel, Oliver North – War Stories, “Secrets of the Bomb,” in 2007; he also worked with Public Broadcast Stations on productions in 2006, 2008, and 2012, to name only a few of his forays into the broadcast media world; and

WHEREAS, highly regarded for his life’s accomplishments, Bill Wilcox became an Eagle Scout with Bronze Palm and Order of the Arrow in 1939, and in 1984, he received an Outstanding Leadership Award and was elected to Omicron Delta Kappa Society; and

WHEREAS, in 2006, the Oak Ridge City Council resolved to name Bill Wilcox as Honorary City Historian. The city again honored him in 2008, proclaiming October 28th as William J. Wilcox, Jr. Day, which was the same day he received the prestigious “Secretary’s Appreciation Award’ given by United States Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman in recognition of his primary advocacy for historical preservation of the original Manhattan Project facilities at Oak Ridge; and

WHEREAS, in 2010, Bill Wilcox was presented the First Annual Wiley Oakley Award by the Tennessee Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus. In 2011, the conference center at East Tennessee Technology Park’s Heritage Center was dedicated as the William J. Wilcox Room, and later that same year he received the coveted East Tennessee Economic Council Muddy Boot Award; and

WHEREAS, having created an incredible professional story of work and accomplishments, Bill Wilcox has equally distinguished himself as a family historian and has published several books on the genealogy of his and his wife’s families, and he has researched

and established archives for his church, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, where he has worshipped and served since 1958; and

WHEREAS, instrumental in the success of many efforts to benefit the community, Bill Wilcox has served on a number of civic boards of directors and has remained active in support of charitable organizations in the local area; and

WHEREAS, although Bill Wilcox has served with acumen and alacrity as a chemist, a management consultant, a historian, an author and lecturer, and civic-minded resident of Oak Ridge, his most important and prominent role in life is without question as the husband of Jeanie Wilcox, his loyal and adoring companion who is the mother of his three children, Martha Wilcox, Dr. Kitty Soldano, and Dr. William H. Wilcox; and

WHEREAS, his forty-three year career makes him one of the most dedicated, knowledgeable, and experienced individuals from The Manhattan Project era; his pride in and dedication to the historical preservation and progressive improvement of the amenities of Oak Ridge; and his deep-seeded love of and dedication to family surely all combine to memorialize for all time the matchless value that Bill Wilcox is to his neighbors, this State, and our nation, which is truly the greatest nation on earth; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper that the General Assembly pause in its deliberations to consider and extol the virtuous, history-marking, and richly blessed life and accomplishments of William Jenkins Wilcox, Jr.; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend William Jenkins "Bill" Wilcox, Jr., of Oak Ridge for his many professional accomplishments in service of this nation during the era of The Manhattan Project in the first half of the 20th century.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we are deeply grateful to Mr. Wilcox for his years of dedicated service to the preservation of the history of Oak Ridge and all that took place within the bounds of that Secret City that ultimately ensured a victorious outcome of World War II. We extend to him our warmest and most sincere wishes for success in all of his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.